New Drug Termed Promising Against Resistant Germs

A "promising new antibiotic" has produced good results in patients with infections resistant to penicillin, it was reported in the September 1 *Journal of the American Medical Association.*

The drug, generically termed oxacillin, was designed to fight penicillin-resistant strains of staphylococci, bacteria which present a thorny medical problem because of their prevalence and increasing resistance to other antibiotics.

Studies have shown that strains of staphylococci are resistant because they produce penicillinase, the biologic antagonist of penicillin.

Oxacillin is a synthetic penicillin which resists destruction by penicillinase, William M. M. Kirby, M.D., Lona S. Rosenfeld, M.D., and Jean Brodie, B.S., department of medicine, University of Washington School of Medicine, Seattle, wrote in the *Journal.*

On the basis of laboratory tests and a study of 68 patients, the researchers concluded that oxacillin is a potent and effective drug when administered orally for the treatment of penicillin-resistant infections. Side effects were minimal, they said.

Good results were obtained in 61 of the 68 patients and rated indeterminate in the other seven, the researchers reported.

At the time treatment with oxacillin was started, 18 patients were considered seriously ill, they said, and in each of these "there seemed a clear-cut response to the antibiotic, and the patient was cured." The seriously ill included six patients with pneumonia, five with severe head and neck infections, and three with infected burns, they said.

In laboratory tests, oxacillin was compared with three other synthetic penicillins and found to be five to eight times more active than one of them (methicillin), against penicillin-resistant staphylococci, the authors said.

"It is apparent from these observations that oxacillin represents an important advance in the therapy of infections caused by penicillinase-producing staphylococci," they said.

THALIDOMIDE AND MALFORMATIONS IN LIVERPOOL—R. W. Smithells, Lancet, 1:1270 (June 16) 1962.

An investigation was made into drugs taken during the first trimester by the mothers of 30 babies with ectromelia, 22 with minor limb deficiencies, 7 with microtia and 40 normal babies. Thalidomide had been taken by 12, 2, 3, and 0 respectively.

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SUMMER OUTBREAK OF INFLUENZA TYPE-B—J. R. L. Forsyth, Lancet, 1:1400 (June 30) 1962.

Two summer outbreaks of influenza type-B differed from the subsequent winter epidemic by the difficulty of isolating the virus and the localization of spread in summer. These differences could reflect changes in the host population or in virus viability.